

Message Text

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62

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O R 162019Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2872
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 0514

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EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (JAVITS, JACOB K)
SUBJ: SENATOR JAVITS' VISIT-PANAMA CANAL

REF: AL STATE 010769 B) BOGOTA 0513

1. A GREAT DEAL OF THE SENATOR'S CONVERSATION WITH THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER (A JOINT MEETING AT LUNCH) DEALT WITH
THE PANAMA CANAL QUESTION. THE SENATOR MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A) THE TREATY ISSUE WAS AN ABSOLUTELY VITAL ONE WHICH WOULD
AFFECT ALL OF LATIN AMERICA, AND ITS SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION
ALONG THE KISSINGER-TACK PRINCIPLES WAS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL;
B) WHAT WE NEEDED WAS ASSURANCE OF AN OPEN, EFFICIENT,
SECURE AND NEUTRAL CANAL; C) TORRIJOS FELT THAT JUNE 76 WAS
ESSENTIAL DEADLINE FOR A TREATY, AND THAT BEYOND THAT TIME
HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE THAT THINGS WOULD HOLD TOGETHER; D)
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SENATOR DID NOT THINK THAT A TREATY COULD
POSSIBLY BE COMPLETED BY THEN EVEN WITHOUT AN ELECTION IN THE
US; E) HE DID HOWEVER BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED WITH ALL
DELIBERATE SPEED, AND THAT A TREATY MIGHT BE CONCLUDED
AND PRESENTED TO THE SENATE NEAR THE END OF THE YEAR, WITH
RATIFICATION IN 1977; E) HE WAS NOT TOO WORRIED ABOUT THE PRIMARIES
BUT IF ONE OR THE OTHER CANDIDATE MADE A CAMPAIGN ISSUE OF IT
IN THE GENERAL ELECTION IT WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS TREMEND-
OUSLY; F) THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE NOT IN A GOOD MOOD ABOUT THE
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CANAL, GIVEN PAST FRUSTRATIONS, AND DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES,

SO THAT CONTINUED EXPLANATIONS AND EDUCATION WERE NECESSARY; G) HE COULD UNDERSTAND WHY TORRIJOS FELT HE HAD TO GO TO CUBA, BUT IF HE PARTICIPATED IN ANY INFLAMMATORY STATEMENTS OR COMMUNIQUE WITH CASTRO THIS WOULD ALSO ADVERSELY AFFECT PROSPECTS; H) HE WAS ALMOST MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE HOT HEADEDNESS IN THE ZONE ON THE AMERICAN SIDE AS HE WAS ABOUT THE PANAMANIAN; E) A SATISFACTORY TREATY COULD PROVIDE THE DRAMATIC DEPARTURE POINT FOR A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH LA.

2. PRESIDENT LOPEZ SAID: A) TORRIJOS WAS AN ABSOLUTE REALIST AND KNEW VERY WELL NO TREATY COULD BE CONCLUDED AND RATIFIED BEFORE THE ELECTION; B) HE WAS DEALING FROM STRENGTH AND PLAYING HIS HAND ACCORDINGLY; C) TORRIJOS WOULD NOT MAKE ANY INFLAMMATORY STATEMENTS IN CUBA; D) THE US SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT TORRIJOS WAS AN AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, SOMETHING PREVIOUS PANAMANIAN LEADERS WERE NOT, AND THIS THEREFORE GAVE US SOME ASSURANCE WHEN WE DEALT WITH HIM THAT ANY AGREEMENT REACHED WOULD BE SUPPORTED BY THE PEOPLE; E) IN THE MEANTIME, WHAT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE US WAS TO PROVIDE TORRIJOS WITH SOMETHING HE COULD USE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE US WAS NOT JUST STALLING, THAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE; THIS COULD AND PROBABLY OUGHT TO INCLUDE SUCH GESTURES AS RETURNING AN AIRFIELD, BUILDING THE ALTERNATE BRIDGE, ETC.; F) THE SENATOR WAS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT IN SAYING THIS ISSUE REALLY WAS A US-LATIN AMERICAN ISSUE AS MUCH AS A BILATERAL ONE.

3. THE SENATOR NOTED THAT THE US WAS TENTH ON THE LIST OF USERS, AND THAT HE THOUGHT OTHER USERS, ESPECIALLY THE LA'S, OUGHT TO HAVE SOME PARTICIPATION IN THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT COME INTO BEING AFTER THE TREATY. THIS NEED NOT MEAN MENTION IN THE TREATY, BUT HE THOUGHT PERHAPS A LATIN AMERICAN ADVISORY COMMISSION MIGHT BE FORMED TO ADVISE PANAMA ON OPERATIONS. THIS SUGGESTION WAS RECEIVED VERY COLDLY BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER. LOPEZ TERMED THE ARRANGEMENT, UNNECESSARY, AND OBSERVED IT WOULD BE OPPOSED BY PANAMA, BECAUSE THE BASIC PREMISE OF THE NEW TREATY FOR THE PANAMAIS IS TO DEMONSTRATE RECOVERY OF SOVEREIGNTY. A COMMISSION IDEA WOULD SIMPLY PLACE SOVEREIGNTY IN QUESTION AGAIN. MOREOVER IT IMPLIED THE IDEA THAT PANAMA COULD NOT RUN THE CANAL RESPONSIBLY, WHICH PANAMAIS WOULD RESENT, AND WOULD THEREFORE COMPLICATE TREATY AGREEMENT.

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4. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID HE WAS ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT PANAMA WANTED THE US TO RUN THE CANAL FOR SOME TIME, AND THAT A JOINT ARRANGEMENT WITH US WAS WHAT THEY WANTED. HE OPINED THAT FOR THE US A BILATERAL ARRANGEMENT WOULD SEEM PREFERABLE, BECAUSE BRINGING IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN A COMMISSION TO ADVISE ON CANAL OPERATION WOULD ONLY MULTIPLY OUR HEADACHES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BOGOTA00514
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760017-0831
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760151/aaaabted.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS, LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS, LIMDIS
Reference: 76 BOGOTA 513
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 JUL 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <26 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SENATOR JAVITS' VISIT-PANAMA CANAL
TAGS: OREP, (JAVITS, JACOB K)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006